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Survey reveals declines in most drug use among Arizona youth; Increase in abuse of prescription drugs noted

Phoenix, Ariz. (October 01, 2008)—According to a statewide survey that included more than 50,000 students, decreases in drug use were found in all but four substances in both lifetime and past 30-day use as measured by the *2008 Arizona Youth Survey*. There were increases in the reported use of prescription drugs, hallucinogens, ecstasy and chewing tobacco.

The Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC), with support from the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families, Arizona Department of Education, Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS), the Department of Gaming's Office of Problem Gambling and with technical assistance from Bach Harrison LLC., conducted the *2008 Arizona Youth Survey* to assess health risk behavior and measure the prevalence of substance abuse—including alcohol, tobacco and other dangerous drugs—among Arizona 8th, 10th and 12th graders. State and county profile reports are available at www.azcjc.gov. The full state report will be available in late November.

The ACJC's *Arizona Youth Survey* report is a biennial study designed to measure the attitudes, prevalence and frequency of substance abuse among youth in the state. The 2008 survey was administered in Arizona's 15 counties representing 320 schools for a total sample of 54,374 valid survey respondents statewide. The overall results indicate a modest decline in overall drug use since the *2004 Arizona Youth Survey*.

"The 2008 Arizona Youth Survey continues to provide very useful insights into the behaviors of Arizona youth and the circumstances in which they live," said Phillip Stevenson, director of ACJC's Statistical Analysis Center. "For example, even though we are seeing evidence of a reduction in the use of many types of drugs by youth, the increase in prescription drugs abuse is of particular concern. As we

*Our mission is to sustain and enhance the coordination, cohesiveness, productivity
and effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System in Arizona*

continue to analyze these data, we hope that it can be used to develop and enhance targeted interventions that address the most pressing issues facing our youth.”

Quantified research is always preferable for decisions in public policy. Various state and local prevention coordinators will be able to analyze the AYS report results to determine what prevention measures are necessary.

“All of us in public service are facing budget cuts, so having the type of detailed data that the AYS provides allows policy makers to determine where the ever-shrinking dollars should be targeted. AYS data allows for this type of informed decision-making,” said ACJC Executive Director John Blackburn Jr.

Brief Overview of Significant Arizona Drug Use Findings

For the purpose of the briefings below, past-month use indicates the 30 days prior to the student’s response on the survey.

30-Day and Lifetime Alcohol Use

Alcohol still is the most commonly used substance by Arizona students. In the past month, 33.1 percent of students have used alcohol, a decrease from 36.3 in 2004, the decrease in lifetime use is somewhat similar: 59.6 percent in 2008 compared to 63.3 percent in 2004. Use of alcohol increases with increased grade level: while 46.8 percent of 12th graders indicated 30-day alcohol usage in 2008, only 23.2 percent of 8th graders indicated usage.

30-Day and Lifetime Cigarette Use

Cigarette use increases with increased grade level. In the past month, 14.7 percent of Arizona students have used cigarettes, and 36 percent have used cigarettes at least once in their lifetime. The lifetime use dropped from 42 percent in 2004. While there has been no significant decrease in 30-day use of cigarettes, there have been meaningful decreases in lifetime cigarette use between 2004 and 2008.

30-Day and Lifetime Chewing Tobacco Use

In the past month, 4.2 percent of Arizona students have used chewing tobacco, and 11.3 percent of students have used chewing tobacco in their lifetime. This represents an increase over 2004, when 3.4 percent of students reported using chewing tobacco in the previous 30-day period, and 10.6 percent of students reported lifetime use.

30-Day and Lifetime Marijuana Use

In the past 30 days, 12.5 percent of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders have used marijuana at least one time, a modest decrease from 13.8 percent reported in 2004. For lifetime use, a total of 27.4 percent of Arizona students reported using marijuana, compared to 31.3 percent in 2004.

30-Day and Lifetime Inhalant Use

While use of other drugs tends to increase with increased grade level, a common pattern for inhalant use is to peak in middle school and decline significantly after the 8th grade. In 2008, 1.6 percent of 12th graders used inhalants in the past month and 5.4 percent of 8th graders reported using inhalants in the past month. The difference in inhalant use trends may be related to the fact that younger students have more access to inhalants than they do other drugs.

30-Day and Lifetime Methamphetamine Use

The 2006 AYS administration was the first in which survey respondents were explicitly asked about their lifetime use of methamphetamine. Compared to the 2006 results, the 2008 results indicate a decline in meth use among all grades. In 2006, 1.3 percent reported having used in the last 30 days and 4.3 percent of survey respondents reported ever using methamphetamine. In 2008, .6 percent of students reported using methamphetamine in the previous 30-day period, and 2.2 percent reported ever using methamphetamine. Past-month use rates by grade indicate that in 2006, 1.0 percent of 8th graders had used methamphetamine; 1.7 percent of 10th graders had used methamphetamine and 1.4 percent of 12th graders had used methamphetamine. In 2008, .4 percent of 8th graders have used methamphetamine; .6 percent of 10th graders have used methamphetamine and .8 percent of 12th graders have used methamphetamine. In 2006, lifetime use rates by grade indicate that 2.6 percent of 8th graders had used methamphetamine; 5.0 percent of 10th graders had used methamphetamine and 6.6 percent of 12th graders had used methamphetamine. In 2008, lifetime use rates by grade indicate that 1.2 percent of 8th graders have used methamphetamine; 2.4 percent of 10th graders have used methamphetamine and 4.0 percent of 12th graders have used methamphetamine. These are significant reductions.

30-Day and Lifetime Use of Other Illicit Drugs

A majority of students never try illicit drugs such as hallucinogens, stimulants,

cocaine, heroin, sedatives, and ecstasy. An even lower percentage of students regularly use these illicit drugs. Total past month use was 1.5 percent for hallucinogens, 1.9 percent for cocaine, .6 percent for heroin, and 1.3 percent for ecstasy. Lifetime use of each illicit drug was less similar when looked at by grade. For 8th grade students, lifetime use was 1.9 percent for hallucinogens, 2.7 percent for cocaine, 1 percent for heroin, and 2.2 percent for ecstasy. For 10th grade students, lifetime use was 5.2 percent for hallucinogens, 6.8 percent for cocaine, 2 percent for heroin, and 4.9 percent for ecstasy. For 12th grade students, lifetime use was 7.9 percent for hallucinogens, 11.2 percent for cocaine, 3.1 percent for heroin, and 7 percent for ecstasy. Among these drugs, there was an increase in the reported use of ecstasy. In 2008, the overall reported 30-day use among Arizona students was 1.3 percent, up from .9 percent in 2004. Lifetime use in 2008 was 4.2 percent, up from 3.8 percent in 2004.

In 2008, the question regarding prescription drug use was changed to capture better and more precise data. This could be an explanation for part of the increase in reported use of prescription drugs, but the researchers do not believe this is the only explanation for the increase in usage. The survey asked about three types of prescription drugs: prescription stimulants, prescription sedatives, and prescription pain relievers. Of the prescription drug categories, prescription pain relievers had the highest rate of use with 17.6 percent of youth reporting use in their lifetime and 8.1 percent of youth reporting use in the 30-days prior to taking the survey.

New Questions added in 2008

In 2008 questions were added regarding the use of over the counter drugs as well as how youth obtained alcohol if they drank in the 30-days prior to taking the survey.

- 11.5 percent of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders report using OTC drugs in their lifetime for the purposes of getting high and 5.9 percent reporting use in the 30 days prior to taking the survey – When not including alcohol or tobacco OTC drugs are the 5th highest used substance among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in Arizona
- Over half of the youth responding to the source of alcohol question reported getting their alcohol at a party and 33.7 percent report that they gave someone else money to buy the alcohol for them

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About the ACJC

The Arizona Criminal Justice Commission is a statutorily authorized entity mandated to carry out various coordinating, monitoring and reporting functions regarding the administration and management of criminal justice programs in Arizona. In accordance with statutory guidelines, the Commission is comprised of 19 Commissioners who represent various elements of the criminal justice system in Arizona. Five of the 19 Commission members are agency heads, while the other 14 are appointed by the Governor to serve for two-year terms. ACJC was created in 1982 to serve as a resource and service organization for Arizona's 480 criminal justice agencies on a myriad of issues ranging from drugs, gangs, victim compensation and assistance to criminal record improvement initiatives. The ACJC works on behalf of the criminal justice agencies in Arizona to facilitate information and data exchange among statewide agencies by: establishing and maintaining criminal justice information archives; monitoring new and continuing legislation relating to criminal justice issues; and gathering information and research on existing criminal justice programs.

Percentage of Students Who Used ATOD's During the Past 30 Days

	Grade 8			Grade 10			Grade 12			Total		
	2004	2006	2008	2004	2006	2008	2004	2006	2008	2004	2006	2008
Alcohol	25.3	24.1	23.2	41.3	39.2	37.7	51.1	47	46.8	36.3	34.4	33.1
Cigarettes	10.7	10.5	8.7	17.7	17.1	16.6	24.4	21.8	23.9	16.1	15.3	14.7
Chewing Tobacco	2.4	2.7	2.6	3.4	4	4.6	5.4	5.4	6.8	3.4	3.8	4.2
Marijuana	9.7	8.5	7.6	16.2	15.7	15.1	18.5	18.1	18.7	13.8	13.1	12.5
Hallucinogens	1.6	1	0.8	2.4	1.7	1.9	2.3	1.7	2.4	2	1.4	1.5
Cocaine	1.6	1.7	1	3	2.9	2.2	3.7	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.5	1.9
Inhalants	5.8	6.2	5.4	2.9	3.1	3	1.4	1.7	1.6	3.9	4.1	3.8
Methamphetamines	n/a	1	0.4	n/a	1.7	0.6	n/a	1.4	0.8	n/a	1.3	0.6
Heroin	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	1	0.7	0.7	0.6
Ecstasy	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.1	1	1.5	1	0.9	2	0.9	0.9	1.3
Steroids	n/a	0.8	0.7	n/a	1	1	n/a	1	1	n/a	0.9	0.8
Prescription Pain Relievers	n/a	n/a	6	n/a	n/a	9.4	n/a	n/a	10.5	n/a	n/a	8.1
2004 Stimulants	1.6	n/a	n/a	2.8	n/a	n/a	3	n/a	n/a	2.3	n/a	n/a
Prescription Stimulants	n/a	1.5	1.6	n/a	2.9	2.9	n/a	2.6	2.1	n/a	2.2	2.1
Prescription Sedatives	5.5	4.5	3.4	8.2	6.6	4.5	9.2	7.1	5	7.2	5.8	4.1
Prescription Drugs Over the Counter	n/a	7	8.6	n/a	10.3	12.2	n/a	10.4	13.1	n/a	6.3	10.7
Drugs	n/a	n/a	5.6	n/a	n/a	6.4	n/a	n/a	5.9	n/a	n/a	5.9

Source: Arizona
Youth Survey

Percentage of Students Who Used ATOD's During Their Lifetime

	Grade 8			Grade 10			Grade 12			Total		
	2004	2006	2008	2004	2006	2008	2004	2006	2008	2004	2006	2008
Alcohol	51.9	50.4	47.8	69.3	67.6	66.2	77.9	74.5	74.8	63.3	61.7	59.6
Cigarettes	33.5	30.8	25.9	45.3	43.8	39.9	54.2	50	50.8	42	39.6	36
Chewing Tobacco	7.2	8	7.1	11	11.8	12.9	16.7	15.6	17.7	10.6	11	11.3
Marijuana	20.4	18.3	16.2	36.6	34	32.5	45.7	42.6	43.1	31.3	29.2	27.4
Hallucinogens	2.5	2.1	1.9	5.3	4.1	5.2	7.6	5.6	7.9	4.6	3.6	4.3
Cocaine	3.7	3.6	2.7	7.8	7.6	6.8	11.5	11.6	11.2	6.8	6.8	5.9
Inhalants	13.7	15.2	14.3	10.9	11.9	12.6	9.1	9.8	9.2	11.8	12.9	12.6
Methamphetamines	n/a	2.6	1.2	n/a	5	2.4	n/a	6.6	4	n/a	4.3	2.2
Heroin	1.5	1.4	1	2.4	2.1	2	3	2.8	3.1	2.1	2	1.8
Ecstasy	2.4	1.9	2.2	4.3	3.4	4.9	5.9	4.4	7	3.8	3	4.2
Steroids	n/a	1.6	1.7	n/a	2	2.3	n/a	2.2	2.4	n/a	1.9	2
Prescription Pain Relievers	n/a	n/a	12.2	n/a	n/a	20.5	n/a	n/a	24.6	n/a	n/a	17.6
2004 Stimulants	3.4	n/a	n/a	6.7	n/a	n/a	8.2	n/a	n/a	5.5	n/a	n/a
Prescription Stimulants	n/a	3.4	3.8	n/a	7.1	7.6	n/a	8.5	7.9	n/a	5.9	5.9
Prescription Sedatives	11	10	8.3	16.5	14.3	12	19.8	17.4	13.2	14.8	13.2	10.5
Prescription Drugs Over the Counter	n/a	14.4	17.1	n/a	20.7	25.7	n/a	24	28.7	n/a	14.3	22.4
Drugs	n/a	n/a	9.7	n/a	n/a	12.9	n/a	n/a	13.4	n/a	n/a	11.5

Source: Arizona Youth Survey